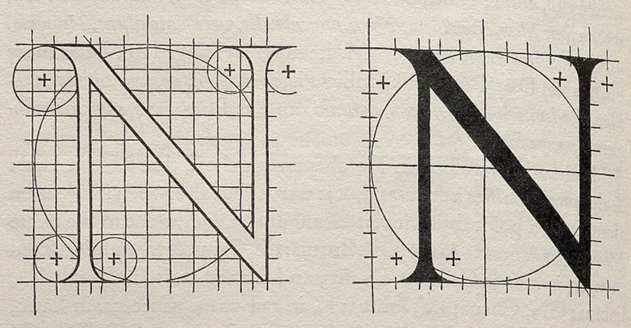
IN imitation of the Greeks and Latins, we also use abbreviations of single letters for proper names, and in our sign-manuals. As, if we wish to signify Andre, Antoine, Anselm, Alexander, Anne, Agnes, and a thousand other like names, we write an A; and so with all the other letters. But our surnames we write at full length. Which custom the Latins have not followed in all their names, as you can see in the ancient histories of the Romans. Let him who may wish to learn how to read the ancient abbreviations which can be seen on medals and epitaphs, have recourse to the fine little book that Probus* Grammaticus wrote long ago; therein there is an abundance and a sufficiency, as to all the letters in their alphabetical order.

* *See the last page of his "De Litteris Antiquis Opusculum."*

I Must not go on without saying that, to make an M well, we must first make a V, then the two legs, according to the number of lines and points before mentioned.



THE letter N here drawn is broader than it is high, and requires for its proper fashioning five turns of the compass, as I have indicated by marking the places on which to set the point of the said compass. Some ancient writers made the foot of the second leg end in a sharp point, but I have cut off the point, herein following Bramante, who made it thus in the Galleries of Pope Julius II, between the Palace of St. Peter at Rome and the Belvedere.

N Should be pronounced with the tongue touching against the upper teeth and against that part of the roof of the mouth nearest the said upper teeth, as that worthy ancient author Martianus Capella most clearly teaches when he says: N *lingua dentibus appulsa colliditur;*

that is to say, 'N is pronounced sharp & clear, with the tongue pressed against the teeth,' by which teeth are meant the upper ones.

OF all the Attic letters there are only M and N which extend outside the square, that is, which are broader than they are high. As I have said, M is broader by two units, and N by one, which makes three units for the two letters, which number three is an odd number, composed of an odd and an even, that is, one and two. Which thing covertly signifies good fortune, as I have said more fully in the Second Book, and likewise at the beginning of this Third and last Book. And this hidden good fortune was intended here by the ancients to signify that it is a great felicity for men to have acquaintance with well-made letters for more than half [of the alphabet?]. L is, as I have said, the middle letter; and therefore M & N come after L, to present covertly a symbol of good fortune and felicity to those who persevere in the knowledge of letters and learning. That some overpass the bounds of the square is a sign of abundance, which signifies that they who abound in the knowledge of well-made letters abound in all good things and in surpassing perfection & virtue. Which thing also the worthy ancients indicated by placing after the M and N the O, which is made round within a square, and imports the complete perfection of well-lettered men, inasmuch as the Circle and the Square are the two most perfect & comprehensive of all the figures designed by symmetry and commensuration, in the which commensuration and proper proportion consists the form and shape of all our well-made & divine Attic letters. I could in this wise adapt and expound in allegory all the other letters; but this would make a volume thicker than a Bible, which I may not do at this moment, because of the time, which requires that I be briefer and pass on.

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